Choose_The_Adventure
WITH LUNGS LIKE GILLS
Extended

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WARNING

This is a mature partial sequel to the main story, 'With Lungs Like Gills'.

In order to fully appreciate the relationships that develop during this short extended story, I'd fully advise you to read the main book before diving into this one.

If you just want sexy times with mythical merman creatures without a care for who is who, and just want to see a human get it on with fish-like people, I clearly can't stop you.

However, if you're into finding out why the mermen act like they do and how their relationship with a human kindled, please go find and read the main story.

Enjoy.

Karamatsu

I stepped off the oceanographer research vessel that I called home for the past four months while working with a documentary crew and a study team, helping the cameramen achieve the shots that they needed, assisting them with their clunky equipment underwater and keeping everyone alive while diving in the seas. Calling out farewells and well-wishes to both teams, I walked from the dock to the main pier laden with my luggage and gear, my feet barely crossing over the threshold before I was tackled by someone.

"Welcome home, (y/n)!" I felt Karamatsu's voice rumble in his chest as my head was pressed against it. I laughed and looked up at the man I had married a few years ago, his striking green eyes meeting my colored hues.

"Hey, merman," I poked his nose with mine as I called him by his nickname, "Been keeping busy?"

"Not busy enough," His breath danced on my lips before they were pressed against me, a hand creeping up my face to cup the right side of my head. I returned the kiss before pulling away, remembering where we were and adjusting the heavy load in my arms.

"Leave that for the house, okay? I still need to fill out the company's inventory, and finish the paperwork for the tour," I rubbed my head against his hand, feeling him gently touch the coral hair piece clinging to my hair.

"(Y/n), it's been four months since you were home. I think I deserve just a little bit of affection," Karamatsu winked at me as he pulled away and took a few of the bulkier items from me, easing my burden, "Work's been interesting for me, to say the least...another new hire tried to make a pass already."

"Again? I thought I told you to talk to their boss about that," A frown pressed my lips down. Ever since he had started working at a manufacturing plant in Tosashimizu, Karamatsu has had some woman stalking him, despite

everyone in his office knowing that he was married. They never seemed to work in the same division, but that didn't seem to deter whoever the woman was. My recent promotion hadn't made things easier, as I couldn't be around him all the time to try and prevent them from flirting with my husband outside of work hours.

"I already did. He said that it'll be taken care of quickly," He set the items down where I had indicated, and waited outside while I finished the rest of my job on land, being as thorough as I could while writing things down quickly. When I finished, I followed Karamatsu to our car and fell asleep in the passenger seat as he drove home, the exhaustion that had been building for months finally allowed to take hold of me.

The steam from the hot bath was refreshing as I lowered myself down into the deep tub, the water barely lapping at my shoulders when I sat up. I heard a soft knock on the bathroom door before Karamatsu walked in with a towel wrapped around his waist, leaving his upper body completely naked.

"I figured that you'd try something," I tittered as I propped my head up with both arms, leaning against the lip of the tub to watch my husband wash himself.

"You can't blame me for wanting to bathe with you, (y/n)," He sat down and began to lather up, the suds starting to cover his scarred body, "Maybe you should find a job that's closer to home, or take clients that don't stay out as long."

"And not have this kind of opportunity?" I moved out of the tub to rest my naked chest on his back, reaching around and grabbing the washcloth from his hands. I felt him lightly lean against me as I began to wash him down, taking my time and moving over every muscle he had. I slowed down when I lowered my hands to his waist, knowing that I was teasing him as the washcloth moved closer to his member. A shudder travelled throughout his body as I lifted my hand off the washcloth and slid my fingers to the base of his shaft, not surprised to feel it hard.

A light groan escaped his lips as his head dropped onto my shoulder, "You're in

that

kind of mood today...?"

"Says the man who made it

very

clear what he wanted at the docks..." I hummed before I kissed his neck, pressing my chest into his back as my fingers wrapped around his length. Moving slowly, I moved my fist along the pulsing member, feeling it twitch and pulse under my touch. Lightly biting his neck, I sucked hard on it to create a bright red hickey.

"Mine," I kissed the hickey gently.

"Always," Karamatsu reached behind him and pulled my head towards his, our lips locking in an intimate kiss as I started to move my hand slightly faster. His tongue brushed against mine, our kiss becoming deeper as he pulled me around him, my legs spread over his lap. I broke the kiss and felt the familiar ache in between my legs, an intimate heat rising and demanding more and more attention. I flinched as Karamatsu brushed his hand over my breasts, gently tugging at the buds as his mouth latched onto my neck, sucking on it hard enough to make his own hickey on me.

"Ah...Karamatsu..." I released my hold on his member, pressing my core against it and running my free hand through his hair.

"Mmm...already?" He licked my neck after his lips released my skin, his hands rubbing my back and pressing me more into him.

"Please..." I whimpered as I felt him harden more underneath me, causing me to grind against him. I found myself on top of him as he shifted to lay flat on the tiled floor, both the sweat and moisture in the air partially clearing off the soapy suds on his chest. My legs on either side of his waist

and my hands next to his head kept me focused on Karamatsu as he started to grind against me. I could feel his hardened shaft rub against my folds, and the movement pulled a moan from my throat.

A smirk crossed Karamatsu's lips as he rubbed against me again, teasing me just as much as I teased him earlier. A sharper thrust shoved the head into me before he suddenly stopped. I tried to move for him, but his hands kept me pinned to where I was.

It was nearly agony, feeling him partially inside of me but not enough to make me feel satisfied. When I looked back down at him to beg, he roughly shoved himself fully into me, cutting off my thoughts and making me cry out in bliss as his girth stretched me out.

"(Y/n), you're fun to tease..." Karamatsu gave a gentle kiss on the lips as an apology before starting to move again. I kissed him back, tucking my feet underneath his legs and rocking along with him.

"So are you..."

He began to move a little faster, his mouth moving from mine to my right breast, playing with the sensitive nipple as his hands moved from my waist back to both breasts. I felt myself go lightheaded as sensation after sensation invaded my mind, remembering all of the times we had sex before and how much Karamatsu meant to me. His teeth nipped the right bud and brought my focus on him again, looking at me with his bright green eyes. I whined as a familiar feeling began to grow deep in my belly, my core tightening around Karamatsu. He picked up the pace as I rocked against him, my body going rigid as I rode out my climax, feeling him continue to grind into me. Releasing my breast, he swiftly turned us around, cradling my head as I felt my back rub against tile as he kept thrusting into me from above.

His hands pressed themselves into the floor above my shoulders, ensuring that I wasn't moving anywhere on the slippery tile, and I had my hands free to do as I pleased. My head fuzzy from the climax, I lightly rubbed his pectoral muscles before narrowing in on his own nipples, pulling at them and rubbing them between my fingers. I saw him wince in pleasure and felt

the rhythm pick up a little faster. My own core grew in heat again as he continued to pump into me, our lips locked in a passionate kiss.

"Let me try something..." Karamatsu released the kiss before picking me up off the floor, pulling himself out as he pressed my back against the tiled wall. A heavy blush flooded my face as I realized what he was doing, obliging by wrapping my legs around his waist. Karamatsu slipped back inside, and his face contorted in pleasure as he pumped into me much harder than before, nearly knocking the wind out of me with each thrust.

I felt him shudder and cried out as he released his seed, feeling it fill me up before he pulled out and cradled me in his arms, both of us a mess on the floor. My body twitched periodically as it recovered from a second orgasm brought on by him finishing inside. I didn't care how loud I was.

It felt amazing.

Warm water surrounded me as he carried me into the tub with him, sitting behind me and wrapping his arms around my shoulders. I leaned my head back and felt his lips move the coral pin still in my hair.

"My Karamatsu girl."

"Always," I smiled in response, closing my eyes as I enjoyed Karamatsu's presence.

Jyushimatsu

"Well, I have some good news," My doctor commented when the door closed behind her. I sat up as straight as I could on the examination bed, looking at the red-haired woman as she focused on her clipboard. My hand tightened on my shorts hem, fearing the worst news.

"Have you been able to narrow it down at all?"

"Yes, and all of the tests that we've run have pointed to you suffering from pulmonary barotrauma," The doctor sat on her little stool, putting the clipboard down and meeting my shocked look. I thought I had taken every measure recently to not be diagnosed with a diver's disease...but it was possible that it had accumulated during the last few years with Jyushimatsu.

"...How long will the treatment last?" I found my voice after a long moment of silence.

"Your case isn't severe, so it will only last up to two weeks. The only treatment is that you stay away from severe pressure changes, so I would cancel any flight or dive that you have until then," Unclipping a small stack of papers from her board, she handed them to me with a smile, "If you're still experiencing pain after two weeks have passed, you'll need to schedule an emergency appointment."

"Ah...yeah."

"Is there anything else before I send the nurse in?"

"Oh...no...That was it."

"All right. It was nice to see you again, (y/n), and I hope you feel better soon."

Unlocking the back door, I made my way from the small home I rented towards the private beach that was attached to the property, heading right towards a shaded part of the brick breakwater that closed off my property from the other private beaches. As I got closer, I saw Jyushimatsu rolling in the shallows with a few marine friends, all playing together as they did when I wasn't home. I stopped at the shoreline closest to them, waiting until Jyushimatsu saw me. When he did, he practically crawled up towards me from the water as the marine creatures vanished into deeper waters, a worried look on his face.

"What was it? Are you okay?"

"Well, I'm not going to die," I laughed as I knelt down to his level, "Doctor's orders are not to swim in the deep waters with you, that's all."

"Eh?! You can't swim with me anymore?!" His frown deepened further, a shocked expression crossing his face.

"Jyushi, it's not that bad. At most, the wait will be two weeks. I just have to wait for my lungs to figure out if they want to breathe properly or not," I cupped his face with my right hand, "It's not for forever, I just gotta take a break from diving is all."

"Are you sure?" He leaned into my palm.

"Positive. Besides, I wouldn't mind us just relaxing on the beach for a few of our dates," I tucked my legs underneath me and sat down heavily, my left stump of an arm held out for balance. A shimmer on my skin caught my eye, drawing my attention to it.

I had a partial sleeve tattoo applied over where the skin had healed, starting at just above the elbow on my bicep. It mimicked my skin being torn up as the observer looked towards my amputated forearm, gold and yellow fish scales revealing themselves underneath the torn 'skin'. In between the scales were metallic gold lines, henna tattoos that accentuated the entire piece. I had to have the henna redone every two to three weeks, but the artist was willing to do it for a significant discount since I had been paying for a few

years now. He became a close friend and the only person that Jyushimatsu showed himself to voluntarily.

I gave a small laugh as I thought back on the memory -- poor Daisuke scared half to death as Jyushimatsu stormed the beach while we were lounging and talking. He seemed to be more accepting afterwards, despite knowing that my fiancé was a merman and asked about how he was doing each time I went to renew the tattoo lining.

"What's funny?" Jyushimatsu lay his head on my lap, leaving only his caudal fin in the shrinking tide.

"Thinking back to when you met Daisuke. I don't think he'll ever forget you," I began to brush my fingers through his damp hair, still partially amazed that it never seemed to get tangled up with the growing crown of yellow coral on top of his head.

"I thought he was gonna hurt you like the other humans had hurt Karamatsu," He pursed his lips and closed his eyes, making a pouting face.

"I don't think that was even close to his mind," I poked his puffed out cheek, making both of us laugh until our sides were sore. We stayed in the pleasant silence, just listening to the waves and watching the sun dip lower in the sky.

"Hey, (y/n)."

"Hmm?"

"The whale shark migration will be passing this way in a few days. Did you still want to go see them?" He looked up at me, his eyes wide and bright in the early evening sun.

"Of course I still do! I just can't swim down with them when they dive," I gave him a confident smile. He reached up past my head and pulled me close, kissing me on the lips.

"How's your back?"

My face flushed, images from last night flooding into my head -- Jyushimatsu pressed against me, pinning me to a rocky outcrop in shallow waters as he kissed my near-naked body.

Jyushimatsu's eyes narrowed playfully, his fingers finding their way underneath my shirt and gliding across my bra, lightly tracing where the bra seams met my skin.

"Hey...you're gonna get me into trouble..." I moaned as I let his fingers roam.

"Not if you're quiet," His lips locked onto mine and pulled me into his lap, his hands tugging at my shirt, "And if you're

that

worried, I can always take you back in the water."

"That may...be the better option..." The kiss left me breathless, and I helped pull Jyushimatsu back into the water. As soon as most of his body was submerged, his grip shifted on my hand and pulled me into the water with him, pressing me against the tall breakwater wall.

Without pausing, he kissed me again as his hands pushed my bra up and off my breasts, the water making my clothes heavy. I moaned into the kiss, propping both of my arms on his shoulders.

"Are you still sore from last time?" Jyushimatsu breathed onto my cheek, his voice labored.

"You mean a week ago...? Yeah...but I'm sure I'll be okay..." I nuzzled my mouth into the crook of his neck to give him some form of reassurance. I felt him nod before removing my shorts and panties, his fingers dancing over my exposed skin. The water was shallow enough for me to stand on my own, but with the merman holding one of my legs up and to the side, I had to rely on Jyushimatsu for stability. I bit my lip to stifle a cry as I felt him tease my folds, lightly pushing one in before pulling it out immediately.

My core began to heat up, flushing my face as his lips travelled from my neck to my now-exposed breasts, sucking on each bud for a moment before moving to the other. My hips began moving with his fingers while Jyushimatsu decided that he'd slip one in all the way. The finger was joined by another, both of them pushing and prodding inside of me, spreading out slowly before he started moving them in and out.

My hand covered my mouth to choke down moans and sighs, my hips matching his speed as Jyushimatsu played with me. I felt his teeth lightly bite down on a sensitive bud, making me arch my back to push my breasts into his mouth. I felt his mouth travel back up to my lips, sealing in my whimpers. With my free hand, I ran in through his hair while pulling it gently.

"You're...not fully ready yet..." He pulled away from the kiss as a third finger joined the first two inside, his rhythm picking up in speed. I heard his words, but my brain was so addled with hormones that I didn't want to wait any longer.

I wanted him now, and I could care less if he broke me just like the first time we had intercourse.

"I...need you..." I stared into his eyes, pulling him back in for a kiss and crying into it as I felt his three fingers spread me wide. He moaned into the kiss and pushed me against the brick breakwater, his waistline grinding against my core as I felt two bulbous and oblong cylinders swell between us.

"You know...that I'm going to be rough..."

"You warned me when we first...did this..." I gently bit his bottom lip, moving to the sensitive spot I found on his neck a while ago. As soon as my lips touched it, I felt one of his claspers pierce my core, whimpering in pain as it swelled to almost twice its size inside me. Jyushimatsu stilled his movements for a little bit before slowly pushing in further, the entirety of one clasper filling me up. I took a deep breath before he pulled me underwater, sealing my mouth in a kiss as a sharp pain pierced my core. I

screamed into the kiss as Jyushimatsu pushed even further into me with a single hard thrust, the pain subsiding as he pulled out.

The relief was temporary as he quickly penetrated my core again with the second clasper, the pain striking once more as Jyushimatsu pressed against me, his hands gripping my hips tightly and his shark teeth now clamped down on my left breast. The second pain wasn't as sharp as the first, but I didn't care despite knowing why. When he pulled out the second time, he pinned me against the breakwater wall again, his waistline resting between my legs while our heads emerged from under the surface.

As the arousal drained out of my system, the pain doubled back in my core and made me gasp for air against Jyushimatsu's shoulder, fighting to not cry. He held me close and kissed my skin anywhere that he could from his position, rubbing my back lightly and massaging my abdomen until I was able to regain my composure.

If a younger me thought that having intercourse with a mermaid was romantic, I'd have to laugh and tell her that the bottom half was

definitely

not human. Out of the marine wildlife, shark sex is probably as rough and painful as it gets.

"(Y/n)...you know that you...don't have to do this with me..." Jyushimatsu rubbed the back of my head while the pain slowly subsided, partially numbed by the cool water.

"I do this...because I love you..." I weakly laughed through a spasm, "...and I've grown to love this side of you. I'm just sorry that I...can't fully copulate with you."

"Hmm..." He hummed as he pulled his head away, moving his hands to my cheeks, "That's okay. I get to devote all of my time to you."

"That's fine with me, too," I leaned up to kiss him, deepening the kiss before pulling away. I found my clothes floating away close by before

grabbing them, realizing that I now had to sprint from the private beachfront to the house. The beachhead was private, but that didn't mean that it was completely blocked from prying eyes. Jyushimatsu moved away when he was sure that I'd be fine on my own, waving and waiting for me to return with a large, happy smile on his face.

Choromatsu

I stepped past the lip of the houseboat that had been acting as my home for the past few years, briskly walking through the bug screen that hung over the open front door and laying down the bags of groceries in the small galley. I busied myself with putting everything away, thankful for the solar powered equipment on board as I took a cold water bottle from the fridge to soothe my aching body from the summer day.

"(L/n)...?" I heard our dock neighbor call out before poking my head outside, looking towards the lavish yacht that was refueling for its next trip.

"Yes, Mrs. Momaki?" I responded to her question.

"Have you heard the new weather report?" The older woman lazily waved a fan by her face, partially moving the sunhat on her head as she sat in the shade of their rear balcony. We had many encounters with each other on the open seas, often trading news of where we came from and perils that we avoided.

"No, I haven't. Is it bad?" I finished the water bottle as I stepped outside.

"Quite! They said that the jet stream has shifted further south than they predicted, making the open waters quite treacherous near Osaka," The fan snapped shut, "Isn't that where you're heading?"

"Yeah, I was planning a course there by just skirting along the shoreline from here in Yokohama. The

Green Tale

can't handle the open seas like you and

Frivolous Thrifting

can," I gave the houseboat a light pat, smiling at the name.

"Just be careful, (l/n). I know how often those kinds of boats can tip over, and yours is quite small in comparison to the others on the ocean."

"I always am!" I gave a brief wave to her before ducking back into the shade of the houseboat, fishing out an ice popsicle from the freezer before heading to the little bridge next to the dinette room to recheck all of the fluid levels of the motor's gas and oil tanks, along with the course I had plotted. A ring of green caught my eye, drawing my attention to my right index finger.

The brain coral ring that Choromatsu had given me rarely left its place, and I refused to take it off while on these kinds of trips. Yes, the green merman traveled with me, but I didn't want to leave anything up to chance.

Satisfied with the checks, I moved through the cabin towards the living quarters, a small bed lining a wall with a smallish television bolted to the opposite wall. Reapplying sunscreen, I changed into something that wasn't heavy on my body -- light shorts and a tank top shirt.

Bidding farewell to my dock neighbors, I kicked the

away from the dock and quickly moved to the steering column to kick up the engines to reverse out. Driving a houseboat was no different than a regular boat, one just had to be a lot more careful with turns. It was a bit heavier, and couldn't handle sharp turns like a yacht or speedboat could.

Gentle and steady was the key.

I knew that people called me crazy for having a houseboat transported onto the open ocean instead of keeping it in a lake that was safe from larger waves. It was the easiest way for both Choromatsu and I to travel around the world, as he'd keep the houseboat from the rough waters and I could provide shelter from unwanted visitors for him.

Pulling out of the calm harbor, I threw the engine into a medium speed before heading back to organize the dock ropes, coiling them up nicely

while the sun mercilessly beat down on me. The hum of the engines was barely heard from the cabin, where the steering column and navigation controls were located. The money that I inherited from Mrs. Yowai's will was more than enough to purchase this houseboat, with the remaining funds dedicated towards upkeep and shopping.

A frown spread over my face as I remembered her funeral. There were a few other people who attended, but no one that I knew personally besides Karamatsu and a man who suspiciously looked like Osomatsu.

"(Y/n)!" I heard my name as a knock sounded near the front of the porch, bringing my attention forward as I unlocked the side gate and reached down towards the water speeding by. A male hand clasped onto mine from underneath the water and I pulled him up with all of my strength, both of us tumbling to the deck.

"You could've waited...until I was at a stop!" I laughed as I sat up, looking at Choromatsu bringing the rest of his tail onboard before closing the gate behind him. He looked back at me sheepishly.

"I wanted to be with you as soon as I could," He gave a small smile, as if embarrassed to say that.

"Let me steer us away from the populated areas, then we can talk," I leaned forward to kiss his forehead before hurrying back to the cabin and charting a longer course towards our destination. It would add another four hours, but I had bought enough food to last an entire week in case of emergencies, and the expanded fuel storage would be more than sufficient to get the houseship there.

The only thing that worried me was the jet stream Mrs. Momaki had warned me about. If it continued to shift south, then

would definitely run into problems on the water.

Locking the wheel into position, I travelled back through the galley, grabbing Choromatsu an ice popsicle and tearing it open for him, carefully putting the plastic sheath into a recycling bag.

"Have you been told of the storm system?" He asked while nodding in thanks as he took the popsicle from me, patting the lawn chair next to him as if requesting me to sit.

"Yeah, Mrs. Momaki warned me to keep clear of the seas," I obliged with his gesture and crossed my legs before leaning forward to mess with Choromatsu's damp hair, avoiding pulling on the coral pieces that were arranged on his head.

"Oh, she was at the docks?"

"Yeah. She and her husband arrived not too long after I did. I think they're heading to the Philippines in a few days," I finished arranging his hair in a different hairstyle, parting his hair with a third part, leaving the left side with more bangs than his right, "It seemed that they wanted to wait out any storms that would brew."

"That's a smart idea," He bit down on the popsicle, closing his eyes as I started to massage his scalp.

"Will we be okay? Is it...one of your brothers?"

"Hmm? No, it's just Mother Nature taking her course," Choromatsu tilted his head back to look at me, "I may not have absolute control like Todomatsu, but I can keep the surrounding waters calm. Our home will be safe from the rough waters."

"Mmm...good," I leaned forward further to kiss him on the lips, tasting the green apple flavored popsicle.

Hours after the sun dipped beneath the horizon, I rechecked my charts and course, verifying that I was heading in the right direction before slowing the

engines to a crawl. Choromatsu had left before sunset to scout out the path I had charted to ensure that there were no sunken ships in our way that we could crash against. I didn't know when he'd be back, as he had to avoid detection from the much larger ships with radar and high-power navigation tools that were more advanced than my pencil and charts. After getting ready for sleep, I put on a lifejacket and lay in bed, only covering myself with a thin blanket as the heat from the day had been absorbed into the room. Rubbing my ring in reminder, I closed my eyes to sleep, hoping that Choromatsu would be okay.

Soft whispering drew my mind back into consciousness, opening my eyes slightly to see red lights sweeping across the galley, the fridge light turning on to reveal the outline of a male, his broad shoulders nearly taking up the doorframe of my room. I slowly reached for my diving knife which was carefully tucked under the bed. When I wrapped my fingers around the hilt, someone shouted much closer than I anticipated and I was thrown from my bed, a rough hand on my right forearm. With a violent twist of their wrist, the knife was dropped to the floor.

I couldn't understand a word they were speaking, the voices raising as if fighting amongst themselves before the ceiling lights turned on. There were four men that I could see -- two in the kitchen, one heading towards the engine, and one holding me down.

"Leave me alone!" I shouted as loudly as I could, kicking towards the man that had my forearm. My foot connected with his knee, but he simply laughed before dropping the flashlight in his other hand, grabbing a handful of my hair and dragging me towards the front door of my houseboat, shouting something to his colleagues. I fought him with everything I could as I was hauled outside, seeing a ship had docked itself next to mine and had lines tethered between the two. I recognized the type of lines instantly.

They're trying to steal my fuel!

I struck my heel into his ankle, not inflicting a lot of pain but managing to stagger him. He hit the deck with a thud, my hair still tangled up in his hand. There was a wave of laughter before my head was pulled up suddenly by someone else, a rough hand on my chin forcing me to look up at an older

man, his eyes partially sunken into his skull while his skin was heavily weathered by salt spray.

He was asking me something, but I still couldn't understand him. I could see him become more and more visibly angry as my silence dragged on. His fist collided with my jaw, the force throwing me against the outside wall of the houseboat. My vision doubled as I tried to steady myself, only to crumple under a volley of blows from multiple sources.

The brain coral ring began to glow softly, a gentle color quickly growing in intensity before the ring was yanked off my finger.

"No! Give that back!" I tried to snatch it away from the thief, but was pinned to the deck by two bodies pressing down on me, a knee on my neck and someone else sitting on my back. The glow began to pulse like a heartbeat before the man scoffed and slipped it into his jeans pocket. My heart dropped as the green glowing ring became stifled through the thick material.

"You assholes! Get off my boat, and get off me!!" I shrieked into the night, using the last of my strength to try and throw the men off of me, furious that Choromatsu's coral was pocketed like some reward. How was I going to explain this to him?

I heard a pump from their boat turn over, indicating that they had successfully connected to my fuel tank and started the siphoning process. I bit down on whatever was in front of my face, the taste of warm copper and iron flooding my mouth before my head was slammed into the deck.

Choromatsu...!

A voice faintly called out to him, stopping the green merman immediately as he heard it again, an urgency filling its call,

Choromatsu!

(Y/n)!

He turned back around, throwing aside his caution as he streaked towards the houseboat, his ears picking up its motor's unique sound miles away. With a fury he forgot he could have, Choromatsu kicked his muscles into overdrive and started swimming at just over eighty knots, forcing the water to move aside so it wouldn't slow him down from his top speed. His sensitive ears picked up an odd echo to their houseboat's engine, like it was next to a solid wall that was bouncing the sound back. As he grew closer, the voice cut off, the silence nearly stopping him in his path.

'

A sudden silence means that the claim was removed

,' Osomatsu had told him years before, '

not that the person is dead

.'

The odd echo revealed itself to be another boat pushing against his home, both vessels now in his visual range. Cruising at full speed, he swerved from the bottom of the ocean floor towards the two, gathering water behind him and sending it ahead of him in a rolling tide, watching in satisfaction as it drove the two boats apart from each other.

They separated before the intruding boat was yanked back towards the houseboat, as if they were tied together. A few humans fell into the water from the sudden stop, swimming back to the surface as quickly as they could. When Choromatsu didn't see (y/n) among them, he clenched both fists in their direction and pulled downwards, giving a twisted smile as the humans were dragged by the water into the crushing depths.

He flinched as he felt a fuzziness creep over her mind, some dark part of him taking pleasure in the killing before he shook his head to clear his thoughts. If he lost himself to the curse now, then (y/n) would most likely

die. Choromatsu heard raised voices, all of them masculine, shouting at one another about what had happened with their boat.

The men were speaking Filipino and, despite being twenty meters from the surface, he heard them all clearly.

"What do we do with this bitch? She bit my finger!"

"Who cares about your finger?" An older voice snapped.

"She's alone, and there was no emergency transponder to warn the coast guard. She's either crazy or running from something," A third voice entertained. Choromatsu crept towards the intruding boat, waiting underneath the hull as the vessel drifted away.

"She'll make a great toy to play with," The arrogant first voice laughed, a dull thud sounding on the deck of the houseboat. Choromatsu imagined (y/n)'s head being slammed against the surface, fighting against the urge to let himself turn rogue. He moved to underneath the houseboat, centering himself on where the thud echoed from before focusing on the waters around him.

The tides and currents responded to his focus, curling up underneath him like a tightly coiled spring. With a great shove, he pushed the waters underneath the houseboat up and out, creating a wall of water that rippled out at an immense speed. The shouts and screams he heard were pleasant, the force of the bucking ship tossing them into the ocean. As he watched their bodies sink into the darkness, he crossed his arms over each other only to pull them apart violently, watching in glee as the men's bodies were shredded apart by the swirling riptides, their gore and viscera pulled to the bottom by the vortex.

I flinched as I felt water hit my skin, the deck cold with seawater that had swept onboard at some point. Shivering slightly, I opened my eyes to see Choromatsu leaning over me, his eyes glowing green to match the bioluminescent tattoos twisting over his shoulders, arms, and chest. There

were tears in his eyes, but there was no emotion behind them as they dripped onto my face.

The intense and wide glare he was giving me reminded me of a predator staring at prey.

"Choro--!" I disregarded my safety as I sat up and wrapped my arms around his neck, completely frightened by what he looked like and unsure if he'd come back to normal at all. I softly rubbed the back of his head with one of my hands as my mind raced with memory, my heart thudding against his chest.

Choromatsu had only slipped briefly into a rogue-like state twice before, both for his survival. The first time was near a fishing boat after he was tangled in their wide nets, and the second happened when he was fleeing from overly curious teenagers that had seen him talking to me from the water.

"...(y/n)..." I heard him slowly say my name.

"I'm here, Choromatsu. I'm here and I'm safe," I fought to keep the fear out of my words.

"...(y/n)...!" I felt him wrap his arms around me, his voice cracking as he started to cry out loud. I could feel him shiver against me -- not from the cold, but possibly from shock or fear, "(Y/n), I was so worried about you...!"

"I'm all right. A little headache, but physically okay," I held him tight against me.

"(Y/n), it felt so good!" He sobbed into my shoulder, the glow from his tattoos fading into darkness, "I killed all of them, and

it felt good!

"

"Shh, shh...you did what you could in the best situation, Choromatsu. Stay up here with me, and sleep," I adjusted my position and pulled him further onto the deck, kicking the side gate closed, "We can figure out what to do in the morning, okay?"

"...okay..." He muttered as he released his death grip on me, pulling me down to lay next to him. I brushed his hair out of his face, watching it relax in the light from the cabin.

I could only hope that I had more time before Choromatsu followed in his younger brothers' footsteps.

Ichimatsu

"...what...?"

I blinked in confusion as Ichimatsu stared back at me, his black eyes narrowed in a disgusted fashion. My hands were clasped around my diving bag, both long fins dangling from my right elbow and the snorkeling tube slung around my left elbow ready to go. I clenched my fists briefly before raising my head again to meet his hooded stare.

"I said I was going to go diving, and was wondering if you wanted to join me--"

"No way," He sunk further under the light waves rippling through the private beach, moving away from me. My arms lowered as a frown spread across my face, my heart tightening as I watched him retreat.

Ichimatsu had quickly turned into a reclusive merman in the past few years, and I thought that I would've grown used to it by now. He never attempted to kiss me, or even reach out to hold my hand when I visited him at the beach, always staying close to the deeper waters and keeping his distance from me whenever I swam.

Four years had already passed since he gave me his coral -- just over nine years since I chose him. I wasn't getting any younger, and I knew that he'd outlive me whether he cared about it or not. My book series had been completed for a while, and gained some notoriety amongst a small niche of genre lovers. I had attended book signings and public events, still a small author in the public eye, before I made the decision to try to bring Ichimatsu and I into a closer relationship.

One would think that claiming someone meant that you wanted them to be around, right?

I missed the ocean badly, I realized eventually. Paying for diving lessons to sharpen my skills and taking breathing lessons to expand my lungs, I was

ready to start freediving again. I wanted it to be a gift to Ichimatsu, a nice reminder of our first swim together.

In reality, I didn't want to be caught off guard by any of the other brothers. I knew that Todomatsu probably still wanted me dead, the thought sending a chill up my spine as I took a step into the water.

Frustration flooded my system and I threw my things to the sand, tossing them aside before rushing after Ichimatsu -- both wanting to punch his face for acting like a standalone brat, and wanting to pinch him until he told me why he was avoiding me like the plague. Of course I knew that catching him was a futile effort due to being a slow human in water when compared to a merman...so I looked up in surprise when I felt my hand touch cold skin, Ichimatsu not moving an inch since I pursued him.

I froze, not wanting to move my hand from his bicep, or wanting to hit him anymore.

Not with the predatory look he was giving me.

His dark eyes had quickly shifted into a bright purple color, the black sclera making the color pop even more. The glowing tattoos he had stood out underneath the sunlight...and they had grown since I last saw them.

They had only covered the top half of his chest and shoulders previously...but now they had swirled around his neck, abdomen, and completely covered both of his arms. The neutral look on his face made me freeze in place, making me feel small and insignificant in his predatory eyes.

The curse...

How could I have forgotten?!

"Ichimatsu..." I fought past the fear in my voice, trying to keep my tone stable, "Is this why you didn't want me around?"

He didn't answer.

I kept my eyes on his, looking for any sign of emotion. I thought I had briefly glimpsed a reaction, possibly shame or regret, but I couldn't completely identify it before it vanished. I reached towards his coral shell with my free hand, moving slowly towards where it hung around my neck. His eyes switched from mine to my hand as it clasped around the coral, just staring and not moving.

"This...is yours, remember? You gave this to me...four years ago," I found my voice and spoke softly, "I'm sure that there was a reason that you...didn't want to tell me why this happened..."

There was no answer again. How far was I going to push my luck?

All the way.

"Ichimatsu, do you remember my name?"

His bioluminescent eyes met mine again in an intense gaze, his head slightly moving in a nod. My heart fluttered as I thought of the possibility that Ichimatsu wasn't completely lost to his family curse. My mind raced with things to ask him, but I couldn't form the words to question any of them.

"Oh, that's a bad position to be in," I nearly jumped out of my skin as a new voice intruded into the conversation, the water betraying my body flinching as small ripples formed rings around my shoulders. Ichimatsu's eyes narrowed and he faced the speaker, my attention following his.

A merman I had not seen in years lounged against the end of the closest breakwater, his red fins flexing in the sunlight as he raised his head from his crossed arms with a smirk on his face.

My face paled in fear. I didn't need this whimsical and emotional deity-like creature to stir up any kind of problem, not when Ichimatsu seemed to be teetering on the edge of predatory fight-or-flight just from my touch.

I felt Ichimatsu's muscles flex under my hand, his arm pulling away from me as he moved towards Osomatsu, a growl rumbling from his throat.

"No need to get mad, little Ichi," Osomatsu didn't move from his spot, raising an eyebrow in interest as his smirk grew, "I'm not gonna take your food away from you this time."

Food...?

"I was just stopping by because there's news going around my sea that a research vessel for the deep waters vanished without a mayday. Just wanted to see if that was your handiwork," The eldest brother put a hand underneath his chin, propping it up, "By the looks of things, it was."

Shock crossed my face as I shifted my gaze to Ichimatsu, his attention fully on Osomatsu as his lips pulled back into a snarl.

"Oh, he didn't tell you?" Osomatsu asked in a teasing tone, "Our curse is accelerated as we use more of our abilities. Since Darkmatsu next to you can warp the lack of light in the deep sea...well, you're smart enough to figure out the rest for yourself."

"...then what about you?" I looked at Osomatsu's body carefully.

"Excuse me?"

"Why don't you look like them?"

"Who says that I don't?" Osomatsu laughed, shifting onto his back, "I'm better at hiding it, you could say. Same with Karamatsu."

He rolled down into the water, the wake of his fins creating an arrow pointed straight towards me. I tried to run away, to make back to the safety of the shoreline, forging through the waters before I felt two arms wrap around my midriff, picking me up and twisting me around to face a charging Ichimatsu. I cried out in fear and covered my face with my arms, not expecting the attack.

The strike never came.

I lowered my arms to see Ichimatsu's irises shifting rapidly between purple and black, a look of both anger and shock on his face. The arms around me

tightened a little as a mouth pressed itself against the crook of my neck, feeling a tongue slip out and lick my skin.

"I'd say that your choice was a waste, (y/n)," Osomatsu's voice hummed against my neck and back as I cried out in displeasure, "How long has it been? Nine years? All of that wasted potential...You would've made a beautiful wife for any of us, and possibly become an equally beautiful mermaid."

His words hit hard as they brought to mind the questions I had already thought about, the hurt bringing tears to my eyes. I looked at Ichimatsu, not wanting to believe the words coming from Osomatsu's mouth despite my own mind thinking the very same things throughout the years.

"You can always change your mind, you know," Osomatsu continued, his lips traveling from my neck to my shoulder, pulling down the soaked fabric of my sun-shirt hem.

"Please...stop..." I try to stifle a moan as his lips connected with a sensitive area on my shoulder, fighting down a blush as I felt him smile, kissing the area harder. I closed my eyes in shame, wishing that I wasn't in this position.

"...mine..."

"Hmm, you're going to have to speak up, little Ichi..." Osomatsu's arms shifted, one moving to cross over my chest to grip my left shoulder while the other dropped below the water line, resting on my hips. I didn't feel him prod any further, bringing a faint question to my mind.

"Leave what's mine alone!" Ichimatsu burst from his spot, reaching out to me with both hands, talons ending each finger. I closed my eyes as I was pushed forward, feeling Osomatsu shove me into Ichimatsu. I collided with a muscular chest before a pair of arms wrapped around my back, a heavy weight now resting on top of my head. I risked a peek to see skin underneath me, unmarked by the glowing tattoos.

"You could've asked nicely, Ichimatsu. It was starting to hurt," Osomatsu chided from somewhere nearby.

"You shitty eldest brother," There was no darkness in Ichimatsu's voice, "Pick on someone else for once..."

"I pick on you because I love you. Did you actually want to kill (y/n)?" The silence dragged on, "Thought so."

"...what the hell is going on?" I pushed away from Ichimatsu, bringing my head out of his embrace to see a grinning Osomatsu rubbing his index finger under his nose, his eyes closed in satisfaction. Changing my focus to Ichimatsu, I was shocked to see that he wasn't in his rogue state. His skin was colored normally, and his dark hues met mine. Though the neutral look was still there, there was no malicious intent behind it.

"Just saving your life again," Osomatsu commented, "That makes it...five?"

"...three...?" I corrected him with a confused tone.

"Ah, so only three. When can I cash in those reward kisses?" The red merman moved in close, almost pinning me between the two brothers. Ichimatsu quickly shoved me behind him, a snarl on his lips.

"You're not. Ever."

"All right, fine..." Osomatsu sighed and backed away, "Just wanted some good luck from (y/n) before heading back out to sea."

"Why me?"

"You're still a virgin," The statement made my face flush with embarrassment, "There's an old saying that if a virgin kisses a sailor before he goes out to sea, he'd return home safely and bed her."

"Who would say that?!" I turned away and shoved both of my hands over my face, feeling the heat and becoming even more embarrassed.

"...aren't you a virgin, too?" Ichimatsu asked slowly.

"Me? I haven't been for a long time," Osomatsu announced proudly, "There were some women that absolutely loved me."

Quiet fell into the conversation before Osomatsu spoke up again.

"You're still a cherry boy, aren't you? I guess I could kiss you."

"Get the fuck away from me!" Ichimatsu yelled, his voice screaming in a higher pitch as I heard water splash around.

"All right, all right..."

I heard a small splash before feeling a hand on my back, startling me out of my shame. I looked behind me to see Ichimatsu looking up at me, having to prop himself in the shallows to get near me. His eyes darted over my right shoulder, the hand that was on my back moving towards it, a finger pressing down on the spot where Osomatsu had kissed twice. I was certain that he had left a hickey.

"Does it hurt...?"

"No..." I relaxed and sat in the calm shallows, the water swirling around my waist as I stretched out my legs.

"Then why do you look like you're about to cry?"

I raised a hand to my eyes, wiping away any tear that danced on the edge.

"Because that was the first time in four years that you've held me," Glancing up at him, I could only watch as a look of shock passed over his face.

"It's been that long...?" I nodded slowly, "What can I do to make it up to you...?"

"Oh, you don't nee--!" I was cut off as his lips pressed against mine, his hand holding my head still as he gently pushed me down onto the shoreline. The calm waters quietly lapped at the sand underneath me, but I was too caught up in the kiss to be distracted. Ichimatsu moaned into the kiss as he

moved closer, pressing himself against my side and using his free hand to explore over my wet clothing.

The cloth offered little protection from his touch as he gently rubbed his thumb on the side of my right breast, deepening the kiss as his hand cupped it experimentally. His mouth moved from mine to travel down my neck, planting kisses as he went. I moaned softly, my mind trying to fight off this feeling of euphoria to remind me that he could still kill me.

In fact, that was his intention only minutes ago.

I'd rather die in a fit of pleasure than fear...

I gasped as he sucked on my left shoulder in the same area as the right hickey, caught off guard and distracted. My body squirmed under his touch, and I lifted my chest into his hand, silently communicating what I had wanted from him. Ichimatsu seemed to pick up on it, shifting himself over and tucking both hands underneath the soaked shirt, his fingers dragging themselves up to touch under my breasts. He hummed as he felt the bikini top resting on my skin, easily loosening it and pushing up to expose my hardening buds, slightly pinching them as his mouth sealed over mine again.

A tug towards my left caused me to roll in that direction, finding myself straddling the purple merman. He pulled the shirt completely out of his way before breaking the kiss, nibbling and sucking on the extremely sensitive buds as I could only squirm on top of him. I felt something push up against my hot core, the pressure intense as I rocked against it while Ichimatsu slightly bucked against me.

He released my breasts with a soft 'pop' from his mouth as he moaned, lightly panting as I continued rubbing against it. Curiosity took hold and I moved further down his tail, sitting around where his knees would've been to see a flesh-colored bulge pushing out from a slit below Ichimatsu's waist. I gently rubbed my fingers against it, hearing him moan and used them to spread the slit a little more open. What had created the bulge sprang out from its scaly prison, revealing a thick member that twitched in anticipation, the flesh stopping near the base where fish scales had been

growing. I wrapped my hand around it and started pumping it up and down, feeling hardened knobs near the head and along the underside.

Leaning forward, I began licking the tip before putting the head in my mouth. Lowering my mouth, I teased him while ensuring that I wouldn't suffocate, starting slowly before remembering my hand was still wrapped around it. I began working in tandem, my mouth handling the simple motion while my hand began to pump and twist slightly. The bumps I had felt were becoming harder before I felt Ichimatsu's hands pull my head off of his member, his face flushed red and his breath erratic.

"Not...that much..."

"Sorry..." I nodded and pulled my hand away, expecting to stop. Ichimatsu shifted his grip from a push to a pull, dragging my waist over his erect and exposed shaft. Both of us gasped as we felt each other's heat, the physical touch so agonizingly close.

If only my swim shorts weren't in the way.

I began reaching down to take them off when I heard a rip, the vibration felt on my skin before a finger suddenly plunged into my core. I cried out and fell forward, panting heavily at the sudden sexual contact, feeling the finger moving around inside of me. It slowly pulled out before joining in with a second finger, making me feel more full, slowly thrusting into me as I felt a thumb dance across my sensitive nub. I looked up at Ichimatsu through my foggy eyes, seeing him glance down at me.

He kissed me hard as his fingers pulled out before shoving something

much

larger in their place. I cried out into the kiss, the pain starting to wash away as he kept thrusting into me, the hardened knobs rubbing against all of the right places and his pace staying constant. There was no time to really recover as his penetration became more intense, more

needy

. I felt like I was on a trampoline with how far I was being pushed and pulled, rocking against his chest as I felt his tip barely leave my core before being driven back in.

"(Y/n)--!" His voice was strangled as I broke the kiss to moan, pushing myself up to try and sit, only to make the angle become more extreme as I felt him go even deeper. It was starting to hurt as he kept hitting something at the climax of each thrust, but the pain couldn't override the intense pleasure.

Ichimatsu suddenly changed pace, forcing himself into me before biting down a scream. I let out a cry as I felt something burst inside of me, my body twitching slightly as my core wilted despite the heat still present. I collapsed back onto Ichimatsu's chest, panting and turning into a mewling mess as I felt his length still inside of me. Some of my sanity wanted off of this crazy and exhausting ride, but most of my brain could only think of more, more,

more.

I felt him grunt as he shifted my hips, pulling his length out and pushing me high onto his waist, breathing heavily and lying exhausted on the beach. I weakly reached up and brushed my hand against his cheek.

"Did...I hurt you...?"

"No...it all felt good."

I felt him smile against my hand, "Then it was worth the pain..."

"Pain...? Are you okay?" I tried to lean up, worry in my eyes as I looked down at my purple merman.

"You...uh...felt the knobs down there...?" I nodded as his face shifted into a mixture of embarrassment and painful remembrance, "I trimmed them...years ago. They were barbs, but...I thought that would hurt too much for you."

I moved to kiss him, giving him a soft smile. I couldn't imagine how much it hurt to do whatever he did to his own genitalia. It probably wouldn't have been as pleasurable if those barbs were still there.

"Thanks for doing that, Ichi..."

He blushed and looked to the side, putting a hand over my head and pulling me back down to his chest. I don't know how long we stayed there, but neither of us cared.

Osomatsu

(Y/n)'s siren song - inner universe by Yoko Kanno, featuring Origa

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"There you guys are!"

A voice from the past drew my attention towards the shore as I breached the water's surface, quickly pulling some loose strands away from my face while locking onto the form of someone standing by the waterline.

A male human waved an arm in the air as a greeting, the short sleeves of his shirt showing off the scars obtained years ago, as well as the newer tattoos that he had been applying to try and hide the worse-looking marks. A pair of dark blue swim trunks sat low on his waist and completely exposed his lower legs and feet to the sun overhead. His dark hair was a bit longer than the last time I saw the man, but the vibrant green eyes underneath his fringe were unmistakable.

"Karamatsu!" Another voice shouted out from next to me, drawing a laugh from my lips as scales of red-and-white surged forward towards the shore. The excited smirk flashed at me was a gentle reminder that it had been years since my husband had seen his land-locked brother, "Why did you move to Shimoshima Island?"

"I didn't have a reason to stay on Amami Ōshima anymore," Karamatsu's voice softened as both Osomatsu and myself drew closer to the shore, the red merman clambering up and shedding his finned form to stand next to his brother. I had to stay in the water, but sat as close as I could to them.

"Then...is Totoko...?" A dip of sadness filled Osomatsu's voice as the happy expression fell.

"Yeah," Karamatsu's answer came out as a heavy sigh, nodding a little, "She passed on three years back."

"Damn...no wonder Choromatsu had gone silent."

"Then is he...?" Karamatsu met Osomatsu's uncertain gaze before letting the question go unasked.

My eyes lowered from the two brothers to the water, letting my hands fiddle with the long pectoral fins of my tail.

It was only a matter of time now...The only brothers who were still themselves were the two standing on the beach behind me. Despite all of our efforts to try and remove the curse by killing off the one who cast it, Osomatsu's family continued to lose themselves to the curse that plagued their bloodline.

Ichimatsu had completely lost himself shortly after I chose to be with Osomatsu, and Choromatsu's disappearance left us wondering if he had succumbed to the curse, too.

Now, it was only a matter of time before the curse completely consumed the two older brothers.

"Gotta enjoy what we have left, right?"

"Yeah, which is why I brought something new for you to try," Karamatsu let out a sharp laugh, producing a wheeled cooler from somewhere behind him, "New food and drinks."

"Ooh, nice!" Osomatsu squatted down and opened up the lid, pulling out two cans, a sealed package of what looked like some kind of rice snack, and another seran-wrapped food item, "Humans make the best food...oh, right. (Y/n), did you want something to eat or drink?"

A faint blush grew on Osomatsu's face as realization settled in his expression, seemingly forgetting that I couldn't shed my tail like he could.

"Just something light, please," I asked with a laugh in my voice, giving him a reassuring smile, "I haven't been feeling super hungry lately."

"Oh? Are you pregnant?" Karamatsu turned towards me after grabbing some other things from the cooler, curiosity written all over his face.

"You dolt," Osomatsu nudged his shoulder lightly as he walked past his younger brother, leaning down to hand me a bottle of water and some crisps, "If she were pregnant, then she'd be ravenous."

"I mean, it's possible," I countered, giving a thankful nod to my husband, "No one really knows what pregnancy is like for merfolk, so I could be."

The stunned look on Osomatsu's face was a joy to look at, his eyes opened wide as his smile faltered between a bashful smile and a prideful smirk, his face completely flushed in embarrassment.

"Well, you're right for the most part. We've never had kids before, so it's possible that a mermaid pregnancy could be the opposite of what a human one is," The second oldest sat on the shore closest to me, "Regardless of what the outcome is, congratulations to both of you."

There was a brief silence before Osomatsu sat himself right behind me, his legs cradling the sides of my tail as he moved in closer to lean against my back.

"Yes?" I glanced over to where he rested his chin on my right shoulder, his signature move when he wanted to know personal information.

"Did you want to carry my kids?" I could feel the heat radiate off of his cheeks as he asked the question in a low tone.

"I don't think I'd mind it," Taking a bite of the snack he had given me, I focused back on the ocean, "It would be difficult with you leaving for longer periods of time, but if it happens then I'm not going to stop it."

"Did you want to try right now?" I felt his cold hands cautiously wrap around my lower waist, feeling his chest press even closer against my back before his entire weight was suddenly ripped away. A choking sound emanated from behind me and drew my attention as I watched Karamatsu

drag Osomatsu back to the shoreline, an apologetic look on his face before it shifted into a scalding glare directed at Osomatsu.

"You have the rest of your lives to do that. Just enjoy the moment and don't ruin it with your inhibited libido," Shoving Osomatsu down on the sand, the second oldest brother plopped down next to him, the shock slowly leaving Osomatsu's face, "Besides...I called you guys here for something a little more serious than pregnancy."

"Did you need help with something?" I turned towards the two, worry prevalent on my face as I lowered the bottle from my lips.

"There's been word travelling around here that shark attacks have become more frequent, and every bite victim has shared similarities with (y/n)," Karamatsu lowered his green hues to my own, his eyes narrowing a little, "Do you know why?"

"Could...it be Jyushimatsu?"

"More than likely," Osomatsu let out a sigh, casting an uncaring look towards the horizon, "It's not like he knows about what's happened--"

"I never said there were survivors," The coldness in Karamatsu's voice drew Osomatsu's sharp gaze back to him, the younger brother meeting it with the same intense look, "Jyushimatsu has claimed thirty-one women now. He wasn't there when you were turned, so he doesn't know that you're no longer human."

"Then...this is my fault?"

"Like hell it is," Osomatsu bit into my question, abruptly standing up and positioning himself between Karamatsu's eye and my form, "Why haven't you done anything about it, Karamatsu?"

"You think I haven't tried?" He stood up to match his older brother's challenge, both mermen giving off an air of intensity, "I became a blood donor for a short while, hoping that my abilities could help the victims stay

alive, but I had to move when scientists started to ask too many questions of me. There's only so much that I can do on land!"

"...are you asking for your fins back?"

"No, I'm not. I'm telling

you

to do something about it."

"Oh, and what would

I

be able to do against our rogue brother?" Osomatsu's voice raised in pitch as his irritation grew.

"I don't know! I'm not you!" Karamatsu responded with a shout, his own frustration apparent.

I lowered my eyes and tried to shut out the shouting match that was unfolding in front of me, my thoughts drifting towards part of what Karamatsu had said.

The victims had similarities to

me

, so

I

was the one that needed to do something...right?

"Where was the last attack?" I calmly asked the quarreling brothers, their verbal argument slowly dying out as they turned to me.

"(Y/n), please...don't do what I think you're going to do," Osomatsu's voice softened as his eyes pleaded for me to stay out of his family's affairs.

"It's better than sitting around and doing nothing. If the victims are similar to me, then it's clear who Jyushimatsu is after. I'd rather not sit around and allow others to suffer because of what he thinks he's doing."

"If that's what you think is right, then go ahead," Karamatsu rested a hand on his hip as his gaze held recognition, "There's nothing I can really do to stop you."

"You're

not

helping here, Karamatsu..." My husband shot him a glare that Karamatsu smiled at before looking back towards me, "You know that you're not able to fully control your abilities yet, (y/n). It could be really dangerous--"

"That's why I want you with me, just in case something goes wrong."

I couldn't describe the look that crossed Osomatsu's face in that second, catching just a glimpse before it disappeared underneath the worried look he resigned to give me.

"It's been years, though...haven't you been trying to find out what you can do?"

"I have, but it's...hard to practice when there's no place in the ocean that's truly empty," My gaze shifted to Karamatsu, "Depending on my pitch, I can either enrage or calm a creature..."

"Then, you're a siren...Fate gave you a hard hand to play with, (y/n), since the one who had mastered the craft was killed."

"What about you?"

"My screams are only meant to knock some sense into those around me," Karamatsu lowered his glare to Osomatsu, "Though, they never really learn

the lesson easily."

Osomatsu gave out a sharp huff as he strode back into the water, letting it rise up to his waist before turning back towards his younger brother, "Where was the last attack?"

"The last reported attack happened a few days ago in Akune. If he's traveling around the coast, then he'll be here in Reihoku by tonight," Karamatsu's words were met with a nod from Osomatsu, the merman diving back into the water and shedding his human form.

I moved to follow him before a light touch on my shoulder stopped me, looking back to see Karamatsu leaning down behind me before enveloping me in a hug, "Promise me that you'll be safe around

him

, okay?"

"Jyushimatsu? Of course, I will."

"He's not the one I'm worried about..."

Osomatsu and I spent the next few hours patrolling along the shores, keeping an eye out for more-than-usual shark activity and an ear for terrified screams.

There had been a few false alarms, each of us nervously laughing it off when we confirmed that Jyushimatsu wasn't there.

...but the silence between the laughter was deep and heavy.

"May...I ask a question?" My voice sounded loud in the quiet waters.

"You just did."

"No, I meant....ugh, Karamatsu seemed to be worried about you and told me to be safe. Is there something that you're not telling me?" I rolled my eyes at his sarcastic remark, diving into what I wanted to know before he could make another diverting joke.

The silence dragged on for a little bit longer as Osomatsu slowed down his pace, allowing me to catch up a bit before quickly bursting ahead as if he realized that he had stopped swimming.

"Osomatsu?"

"It's none of your concern..."

"

That

doesn't sound convincing."

"Please, (y/n)," Osomatsu whirled back to me, some of his spines flaring out in agitation. The expression caught my attention as a mixture of worry and fear briefly crossed it, "Leave it...I'll tell you about it when I'm ready."

"Okay..." I pushed myself back to keep away from the venomous spines, "I get it...I'm here when you're ready to talk."

"Fight! Fight!" The shriek caught us both off-guard before I felt a pair of hands grab at my left shoulder and neck, the talons digging into my skin as I was shoved downward into the sand far below us, "Not nice to fight!"

"Jyushimatsu!" Osomatsu's voice roared in anger as the manic smile of the yellow merman flashed above me, "Hands off my wife!"

"You promised...you promised me," I watched in terror as the black sclera accented the small glowing yellow irises of Jyushimatsu, "You promised to choose me, (y/n)."

"Jyushimatsu, I--" A scream of pain was ripped from my throat as his talons sunk deeper into my skin, drawing blood from each puncture wound.

"You lied to me, so you need to be punished!" There was no trace of sanity left in his voice, no glimmer of dark coloration near the edges of each iris...

Jyushimatsu had truly become a maddened creature.

"Stop it!" I yelled in terror, trying to wrench away from his grip as the shark merman continued to pin me against the sand while both of our tails kicked up a storm of sediment, "Jyushumatsu, let go!"

The wicked smile pulled tighter across his lips as the jagged teeth exposed themselves, his fingers tightening further as the waves of pain radiated throughout my shoulders and arms. In a flurry of reds and yellows, my shoulders were jerked to the left as an inhuman screech ripped through the water, realizing that Osomatsu had pulled the attacking brother off of me.

Straightening myself out, I could only watch Jyushimatsu's curse marks glow brightly against the dark water while similar marks carved themselves into Osomatsu's skin, lighting the water in his blood red aura.

Osomatsu bore almost as many marks as Jyushimatsu did across his chest, back, and arms. His face was twisted into a predatory snarl, turning away from me just as quickly as Jyushimatsu as the shark merman lunged at my husband with his own teeth bared for a bite...but I had seen it.

I saw the black sclera completely surrounding the glowing red hues.

Osomatsu was losing himself just as quickly as his younger brothers.

"

The curse can only be broken by a human

," Homura's voice whispered in my ear, prompting me to cover them with my hands, "

You're no longer a problem to me...

"

"Stop..." I could feel my throat becoming more tense as frustration built within my heart, the reality of the situation hammering home with every heartbeat.

I was no longer in a position to help any of the brothers...and hadn't been in that position ever since I was turned into a mermaid.

Homura's laugh echoed in my head as I felt her phantom fingers brush against both of my cheeks, drawing my focus from the fighting mermen.

"

In praeceptis meis ordines

."

Again, her ghostly voice caressed my ears as I felt myself take in a shuddering breath while my eyes turned towards my husband.

My heart hammered like a caged beast in my chest as I realized what I was about to do. There wasn't anything that I could do, as the next noise would determine what would happen to those who heard it. I had tried holding back by closing my mouth when first experimenting with my power, but the experience drove my mind insane while my body became catatonic for a long while.

'

Just focus on me,

' Osomatsu's gentle voice brushed against my mind, calming a little of the fear of what was about to happen, '

If you need to use your ability, I can handle whatever it is. Know that I love you, (y/n).

'

My mind sharpened as I relaxed my vocal chords before exhaling, the tense strain quickly easing into a melodic note that blasted through the waters before hitting both mermen.

The sound was still loud enough to drive them away from each other, their hands pressed against their ears in agony. My heart broke as I watched Osomatsu writhe away from the sound, the full display of curse marks still prevalent as he steadied himself.

I had sung something that should've calmed them both down, even if they were fully immersed in their rogue state...but I clearly failed.

"You hurt me!" Jyushimatsu cried out through a burst of fanatic laughter, recovering from the distraction much faster than I thought possible, "You hurt!"

I pushed back against the water to give myself more space as he corrected his own angle of approach, quickly charging me with his talons extended and teeth bared. Sucking in a quick breath, I let what I could release from my lungs before his hands latched onto my throat, clamping down and completely closing the windpipe as Jyushimatsu braced against the violent soundwave.

"No more song...no Todomatsu," Jyushimatsu leered over me as his fingers tensed, my hands clawing at his face to try and push him back before switching to his hands and arms in a desperate attempt to breathe again. The yellow glow from his marks became more brilliant as the happy smile grew wider, my heart desperately trying to pump blood to my head while my lungs began to ache for something to breathe...water, air...

I wordlessly opened my mouth, urging any kind of sound before black swirled around my vision.

"...one more time..."

The black along the edge of my vision grew lighter with a warm red as a pair of arms reached around my head, their jagged talons digging into Jyushimatsu's forearms viciously. The shark merman screamed in agony

before he wrenched himself away from me, ripping his forearms loose from the taloned hands that now curled themselves around my shoulders.

"Breathe...and try it one more time, (y/n)."

I flinched at the physical touch, hearing the dark voice behind me ring with a familiar tone of teasing as I fought to catch my breath. The hands rested lightly on my shoulders, a weight settling over them as if someone was hugging me from behind.

"Please..."

I'd never heard Osomatsu beg...and I never wanted to hear it again. The pain in his voice was obvious now, as if he was fighting for control of something.

Staggering through a rough inhale, I recoiled as the arms fell from my shoulders, dragging the hands closer to my throat.

I belted out a song, fear laced throughout its normally hauntingly beautiful harmony, the lyrics falling from my lips as I followed the scales as perfectly as I could. The first verse soared into the chorus before I immediately dove into the bridge, not letting myself or either rogue merman recover. My throat began to feel raw and abused, quickly taking breaths of water where the song allowed it before continuing where I had left off.

I could feel tears well up in my eyes, knowing that Osomatsu had loved to listen to me sing this song before my ability took over. The somber meaning of the song hung heavily in the water when I finished, moving myself away from both Osomatsu's and Jyushimatsu's still forms.

Silence filled the space between all of us, the movement from Jyushimatsu drawing a heavy flinch from me before I moved further away from him.

The yellow marks had dimmed as he turned his head to look at me, gazing at me for a moment with his yellow hues before turning away and swimming into the deeper waters.

I didn't know what his meaning was behind the small smile.

"Osomatsu...?" I softly called out, wincing at the sudden pain at the back of my throat.

He didn't move.

"Osomatsu," My tone grew tense as I slowly swam towards him, my heart growing heavier with every second that passed. His red marks had faded completely, the fingernails shrinking to their original size, "Please be okay..."

"Remind me to never piss you off," Osomatsu slowly righted himself as I approached, curling his hands into fists before letting them relax once more. He gave himself a lookover before glancing at me, his dead eye still holding some red glow while his seeing one was normal, "What about you? Are you unhurt?"

As Osomatsu asked, he moved close to me and curled his tail around mine, mindful to keep his spines away.

I pointed to my throat with a small grimace, leaning into his left hand as he caressed my cheek.

"Right...it was a full song, wasn't it?" Osomatsu's gaze quickly looked over my face, settling on my throat before his focus softened, "Did I get through?"

A confirming nod brought a sad smile to his lips.

"I guess I'm not as good at hiding my condition as I originally thought..." The laugh that accompanied his words sounded forced, the smile fading away before Osomatsu brought me close with a hug, "We'll work on your ability together...Don't label me as a lost cause just yet."

"But--"

He silenced me with a kiss, breaking it only when I kissed him back.

"I think I've got a plan...but it will only work with you."

"Against the curse?" I slightly raised an eyebrow in doubt before he pressed his lips against my brow, giving me his usual smile when he pulled away.

"You pulled myself and Jyushimatsu out from a deep place. Are you willing to give it a try?"

"Anything I can do to help," I held my husband close, feeling hope light up in my chest once more as he returned the gesture with his arms and tail, keeping me against him until I was ready.